

Despite some uncertainty caused by late passage of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill), Alabama's farmers planted more corn and soybeans for crop year 2002, but fewer acres of cotton and peanuts compared with the previous crop year. Row crops remained in mostly fair to good condition throughout the growing season even though there was a shortage of moisture in many areas. In late September, rains covered much of the state and persisted through the end of the year, causing crop conditions to deteriorate. Corn was the only major row crop that ended the year with a higher average yield than was forecasted in August. Alabama's **corn** producers planted 200,000 acres, an 11 percent increase from the 180,000 acres seeded for the 2001 crop. Corn yield was 88 bushels per acre, 5 bushels above the ten-year average, but 19 bushels below the 2001 record of 107 bushels per acre. Nearly all of the State's corn was mature and more than 75 percent was harvested when late September rains soaked much of Alabama. The State's **cotton** producers planted 590,000 acres in 2002. Excessive rain during the fall caused seed regrowth, poor color, and fungus in much of the crop. Cotton yields continued to deteriorate throughout the season. Growers realized an average yield of 507 pounds per acre, 158 pounds per acre less than predicted in August, and 223 pounds below the previous year's yield. Alabama growers abandoned 50,000 acres of cotton during 2002, more than double the ten-year average for abandoned acreage. **Peanut** producers planted 190,000 acres, 10,000 acres less than the previous year, and harvested only 185,000 acres, a decrease of 14,000 acres compared with 2001. In August, crop condition was mostly fair to good and producers expected to harvest 2,500 pounds per acre. By year's end, the yield was 2,050 pounds per acre, 111 pounds per acre less than Alabama's ten year average. **Soybeans** rebounded to 170,000 acres from 140,000 acres the previous year. The dry summer and wet fall drove soybean yield down to 24 bushels per acre, 11 bushels below last year's record of 35 bushels per acre. **Hay** yield was 2.2 tons per acre, identical to the State's ten year average. Farmers harvested 1.76 million tons of hay from 800,000 acres. **Irish Potato** planted acreage was 3,100 acres, and producers harvested 555,000 cwt. from 3,000 harvested acres. There were 2,700 acres of **sweet potatoes** harvested during 2002. The average yield on those harvested acres was 180 cwt., the highest yield since 1994 when yield was 190 cwt. per acre. Digging was hampered by rainy weather and cool conditions which slow harvest and reduced quality and yields throughout the state. It was a fairly good year for the Alabama peach crop with production of 19 million pounds valued at \$8.4 million. On the other hand, the pecan crop added up to only 7 million pounds for the year and was valued at \$4.0 million.

### Normal Crop Progress

Crop	Planting Begins	Planting Ends	Harvest Begins	Harvest Ends
Corn	Mid-March	Early June	Late July	Early Nov
Cotton	Early April	Mid-June	Mid-September	Mid-December
Hay, first Cutting	---	---	Early May	Mid-July
Peaches	---	---	Mid-May	Mid-July
Peanuts	Late April	Mid-June	Early September	Early November
Pecans	---	---	Early October	Mid-December
Spring Potatoes	Mid-January	Mid-March	Early May	Early July
Summer Potatoes	Early March	Early April	Early July	Late August
Sweet Potatoes (South)	Mid-March	Late June	Mid-July	Early-November
Sweet Potatoes (North)	Mid-May	Early July	Mid-September	Late October
Soybeans	Late April	Early July	Late September	Mid-December
Wheat	Early October	Late-November	Mid-May	Mid-July